

Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Exchange With Reporters During a Tour of the Bush Ranch in Crawford, Texas

August 25, 2001

Ranch Tour

Q. Shouldn't you be doing that with an axe?

The President. I've got my earplugs in.

Q. Oh, lucky.

The President. What?

Q. I was just asking, shouldn't you be doing that with an axe?

The President. No, that was Abraham Lincoln.

Q. My mistake.

The President. I'll tell you what we ought to do. What we're doing is, we're cleaning this out. We're making a trail from the top to come down, over here. Do you all want to walk in here? It's kind of neat in here. These cliffs are pretty unusual from this perspective. And then—this is a very long canyon. I'll take you down, if you want to see where the mouth of the canyon is, and the trail was cut up in here. And then I've got another canyon, right next door, if you'd like to see that, that we've improved. It will give you a flavor for the ranch.

But what we're trying to do is to make these really beautiful cutouts available for anybody who wants to walk up in here. I think you'll see that we make them pretty accessible without disturbing the natural beauty of the place.

If you want the details, that was a dead hackberry. H-a-c-k—[*Laughter*]

Q. He's writing it down.

The President. Anyway, what will happen is, is that when the rainy season comes—this all gets damp in here—we'll fire up this pile of leaves and stuff and burn it. This canyon—you can see, behind you, all the erosion—this gets a lot of water coming through here. There's seven of these on the ranch, and when it rains, these all flow down toward the bottoms. Eventually, in this case, these canyons feed into the middle fork of the Bosque River. The guy from A&M we had out here,

he spotted about 17 or 18 different variety of hardwood down below.

So what do you want to do?

Q. Come down.

The President. Come on down here, or do you want to start from the bottom and walk up? We'll start from the bottom and walk up. I've got room for five people. We'll get the scribblers, AP and Reuters.

Q. Thank you.

[*At this point, the tour continued. When the transcript resumed, the President's remarks were joined in progress.*]

The President. —just use the cedar that we cut. Used a crowbar to dig the hole. We'll put another one below and then make sure the steps are—I've got a little more work. Do you see those two? Those are dead right there. Those are ash. Do you see the two trees there, the dead trees? I'll cut them out.

And so basically, what we've been doing in here, is we've been cutting out the dead trees, the trees that have fallen down, and some undergrowth, just to open it up, so that when you sit out here for a picnic, you've got a pretty good view of this beautiful canyon.

Q. Are you trying to make a hiking trail for people to use?

The President. Yes.

Q. Now would the doctor and the nurse both normally be here, or is it the chainsaw that brought them out?

The President. No, they're with me—like when I ran this morning, they were here. They go everywhere I go on the ranch.

Q. Not that they don't trust you with a chainsaw, huh?

The President. Well, they don't trust me with my running, either. [*Laughter*]

Q. Won't the rain erode the trail? How do you stop that?

The President. Pardon me?

Q. The rain—won't the water erode the trail? Do you have to keep redoing it?

The President. No, actually we're not going to put it on the creek bottom. You'll see, there's a series of flats, as you come up the canyon. The canyon is not uniformly steep. And so there will be—one side of the canyon will be steep, and the other side will

be relatively flat. We've cut out a trail, mainly cedars. Cedars are a—you know, some of the big stands of cedars are important, because they become nesting materials for things like the golden-cheeked warbler, although we don't have any on this property.

On the other hand, the little cedars, they crowd up on these beautiful hardwood, and they soak in a lot of water. I mean, they take 30 percent of the water, more or less, that is taken in by these trees, are taken in by cedar. And cedar is just a plague of a lot of places around Texas.

Q. What did you mean when you said you burn it?

The President. It means, we take a match—

Q. I know that, but isn't there a risk of spreading fire?

The President. No, in the rainy season, the wet season.

Q. In the rainy season. I see.

The President. Right now you can't burn because there's a burn ban. And obviously, we'll honor the burn ban.

[*The tour continued.*]

The President. The thing about this—this is kind of a transition zone. And see how close the rock is to the surface here? This is basement rock. And as you come from the southwest part of the ranch, where you come in, this way, the soil obviously thins. And so it goes from pretty good hay country and crop country—there's a corn field right next to our neighbor's pasture. The property is only good for grazing, and it's pretty thin at that. But because the rock is so close to the surface, it enabled—there was a series of eroding activities that caused these canyons. And there's about 3½ miles of lowland. You drop off about 90 foot from here down to where we're going.

And so it's a whole other world that you—the closest thing you can tell about this ranch, when you drive in here is—you know that dip when you're coming in, what they call Bluff Creek? Have you seen the cliffs?

Q. When you bought this property, and you saw that land, did you decide that you wanted to turn those all into hiking trails?

The President. Oh, yes. Look, this place has got so much variety on it, and it is a

unique piece of property for Texas. You'll see the trees down here. They're really big and magnificent trees. I mean, I fell in love with it the minute I saw it. But I also knew I was going to have to—get to do a lot of work, not have to. I really like this. I like being out here. I like spending a lot of time outside.

Q. Have you been doing this every day, working on this trail?

The President. No, not every day. Like, I didn't yesterday. The military folks didn't leave until about 5 p.m. yesterday.

Q. You could have handed them a chainsaw and asked them to help.

The President. Exactly. Let me take you up to this one finished product first. I think you'll find this interesting.

Q. How far away from your house?

The President. We're about a mile—this is the—not necessarily as the crow flies, but this is the 3-mile marker on a rut of mine, right up here. But I—you had to have gone in kind of a—

Q. Meander around?

The President. Yes, meander around a little bit.

This is the beginning of a very long pasture that—I say long—it's two-thirds of a mile. But just to give you a feel for it, these cedar elms, interspersed with pecan and different types of oaks—you see the size of the cedar elms up there? And you can see that the pasture's been well maintained over time, and it goes for a long way. I think this is a—

Q. So do you have livestock grazing out here?

The President. Yes, we do, sure do. I don't own it, but the guy—Ken Engelbrecht does. This is a bur oak. This is a very rare—not rare, it's just a beautiful oak tree, this thing right here, and it produces these magnificent burs. This is a live oak here.

Q. So the horticulturist has already been out here?

The President. Yes, we had a—Thursday, two guys from A&M came out, and we had a really good visit. By the way, there was another pasture beyond there that really is pretty.

This is what we call the cathedral. This is where—hey, look, average campers. [Laughter]

Q. What do you know?

The President. I'm interested in these trees. This place, you learn to fall in love with trees.

[*The tour continued.*]

The President. I tell you—this is the area we call the cathedral. The only thing I suggest, the camera dogs, look for three-leaved plants and avoid them.

Q. Poison ivy?

The President. It's called poison ivy.

So I'd finished a long run one day. It was pretty wet, and I started walking up. And I heard this trickle, sound of running water. And it turns out this is a waterfall when it rains. And it pools—the water pools right—you're welcome to walk up there.

Anyway, be careful of poison ivy if you have shorts on.

Q. What about snakes?

The President. You're okay for snakes. Avoid this plant right here. Like you.

Q. I'm not allergic.

The President. You're not? Then you're in good shape.

Where are my writers? Oh, there you are.

Q. We got run over.

The President. You can come in here.

Anyway, this fills up with water when it's raining. So this comes over here, trickles there, fills up water, so you've got a nice little pool. Eventually it fills up, and it starts moving down, and it makes a nice little stream. I've seen fox in here. I've seen all kinds of birds. It's a wonderful spot to come up in here and just kind of think about the budget. [*Laughter*] I mean—

Q. I thought you'd rather think about that with the chainsaw.

The President. That's exactly right. Very good, Patsy [Patricia Wilson, Reuters]. I wish I'd thought of that.

There are seven canyons like this. You've seen two of them. This obviously is a more shallow canyon, but it's very dramatic when you get to the end. And then the one that you were seeing there, it's a wonderful picnic spot because it's got a natural amphitheater to it. Then if you'd like, I can walk you up, to just give you a feel for what one of these long canyons is like. We've cut a little trail up in there. The walking's a little difficult

because we haven't had a chance to burn the piles that we've cut.

This is an amazing place in here.

Q. So what do you do? You come out here, and—

The President. I've come out here—you know, I come out here some. And you know, you don't want to get out here from about right now until about 4 p.m., because—

Q. It's so hot, yes.

The President. It's like an oven.

Q. So in the morning, you'll get up—

The President. We'll get up early. Today the sunrise was magnificent.

Q. So you'll come and watch the sunrise?

The President. Well, we walked—actually, this morning I ran 3½ miles, and walked. And then Laura and Condi Rice and two of our house guests, they walked 4½. It was just magnificent. Started about 7 this morning.

I'll work out here until around noon. We've got three couples as house guests. Beth, the barber from Austin, is coming out. She'll want to see this place. So I'll give her a tour. I want to look good for the Little League World Series tomorrow—the Hall of Fame induction ceremony.

Little League

Q. Oh, that's right.

Q. What were your stats?

The President. You know, I'd better not give them to you, because somebody will dig them out and find that it wasn't accurate. I was a pretty good player. I was a catcher on the Cubs, the Midland Cubs. As I said, I peaked in Little League.

Q. Were you Hall of Fame quality?

The President. Little League? Well, I qualified by the fact that I was the first President ever to play Little League baseball. I think that's—you know, first guy to hit 60 home runs, first guy to actually put the uniform on. What the heck? What's the difference?

[*The tour continued.*]

Ranch Tour

Q. So how many hours a day are you out here?

The President. About 3. But I've had the full day already. I got up at 5:45 a.m., read

all the stuff I needed to read, and then took off at about 7 a.m. with a little run, got back to the house about 7:45 a.m., and we had a CIA briefing for an hour and a national security briefing. Both of them took an hour. Then we came down here and started working. And this will be it. Probably finish about 12:15 p.m. or so.

Q. So, you're so in your element here. Are you dreading going back to Washington?

The President. No. Life is a series of contrasts. And I like it here a lot. I really do. And I am in my element here. We really like it. But I also like—I wouldn't have run for President if I didn't like the challenge and the give and take and the sense of accomplishment. Plus, we like living in the White House. It's a nice place to live, as they say in Crawford.

Q. I know, but I think when people see you out here, who haven't been to the ranch before—a lot of us haven't—now we sort of get it.

The President. Get a feel for it, yes.

Q. I mean, get why you guys come down here so much.

The President. Well, it's our home, and we love it here. You know, I'll come back—Vladimir Putin's coming out here, so I'll be back relatively quickly. I've got a lot of work to do in Washington. I'm looking forward to going back. I've just got a lot to do. As a matter of fact, I'll be at my desk on Friday, presuming they've got the White House—the Oval Office refurbish completed.

[*The tour continued.*]

Hunting

Q. Now, do you go hunting on the ranch?

The President. I don't. I don't hunt deer, but I do hunt dove. And I have hunted dove. We don't have any quail. And I don't want to shoot the turkeys. I like turkeys. But we let people come and thin out the deer. A ranch can overpopulate with deer. All right, we're moving.

This is the mouth of the canyon, where you all were, up top.

[*The tour continued.*]

Ranch Tour

The President. We're trying to keep people out of the riverbed—out of the creekbed,

so if there's water here, there's a trail. And where it gets—where the crossings are relatively deep, we'll build a kind of bridge.

Anyway, you can kind of get a feel. These little cleared-out areas now, they'll be full of windflowers in the spring. And the greens will come out. This place was emerald green in the spring. I mean, it's hard to envision, and you probably think I'm exaggerating, but we had enough rain to really green this place up. It was spectacular.

And these canyons will be full of flowers. And some of these trees are flowering trees. The whole purpose is to make it accessible. What we just walked across would not have been accessible, unless you wanted to cut your arms up on the brambles, that are—like these things. There's a bunch of them around here that—so the idea is to smooth it out. Cut it out first, like we've done, and then burn it. And then we'll come out here, and where it's needed, we'll kind of try to smooth it up. Probably drive some Gators up in there, which are these John Deere, Jeep-looking things, to try to make the path easier. But even though it's hot, at least you're not having to cut through a bunch of brush to get up in here. Anyway, we can keep going, if you like.

Q. How long did it take you to clear this whole area out?

The President. It took us about 5 days. We're not through yet, either. See these things? These are the things you've got to be real careful about. And we need to get rid of those. They make it hard for people to—you can see, like in here, these were all cedar, young cedars. Not only do they take the water away from these trees, but they made it impossible—and these thorns grow up in them, and so it makes it kind of jungly.

This area here—we're going to drive up in here, be able to drive these things up here. We'll clear it out and probably build a little bridge across here, big enough for a John Deere Gator.

We can keep going if you want. I mean, we've got a little ways to go. This will give you a feel for what it's like. It's up to you all.

Q. Sure.

Q. Yes, we'd like to.

The President. Good with me.

The other thing is, in the winter, a lot of times of the year, winter and early spring, you can imagine this is beautiful. And see these cliffs in here? So this is like you're in a bowl. This side is a little more gentle. This side's a little more steep, here. The base of the cliff—the cliffs are really beautiful, aren't they?

These are where the Indians came up. They would come up—the Tonkawa Indians would bring their horses up the middle fork of the Bosque, and they would run them up a canyon like this. And you can see where we were, at the end of the canyon. And it's a pretty sheltered area. If there's any water, there would be pools of water in there. But this is where they supposedly ran their horses.

Q. And this will all be a running creek in the spring?

The President. Yes, when it rains. It's beautiful.

Q. When do you expect—I mean, what months does it start filling up?

The President. Well, we don't know. I'll drive you out of here and show you one other part of the ranch. We've got a mile and a half of Rainey Creek. It's a much bigger creek. It's still got some pools of water in there.

[*The tour continued.*]

The President. All right, this is—see where we are?

Q. Is this coming up on the cathedral, on another angle?

The President. That's where you all were standing, up top.

Q. Oh, the first one?

The President. Yes. This is fairly typical of what this place could look like, if we didn't make it easier to—we cut some of this out, and we already stacked it. But that's where you all were standing, up there.

And the idea is to be able to walk up from the bottom or get down from the top. It's a beautiful—area. But this is also to make it easy for people to walk through here. It's kind of fun, I figure, a place for people—if they want to get lost up here, they're welcome to do so. And I want these canyons to be accessible. There are a few others. One of them's really hard to get to. I hiked up

in there. I mean, it's really hard to get up in there. And I don't know if we can ever make that one really accessible.

The other one will be accessible only if we get in there with a chainsaw and spend a lot of time, because it's really overgrown. So we may leave one the way it is and make the other one—

Q. Think escalator. [*Laughter*]

Q. Are you able to hike around here on your own, totally on your own?

The President. No. I hike around up here. As you know, the—[*inaudible*].

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Plus, the military aide is within a certain distance of me at all times.

Q. So even on your own property, you can't get lost?

The President. Right. They stay—the military aide, the doc, and the nurse live on the property. And fortunately, they're such fine Americans, I don't mind hiking with them.

Q. How do they feel about it?

The President. That's something you need to ask them. That's a good question.

Q. What is it you like about coming out here?

The President. I like—I mean, it is one of the few places where I can actually walk outside my front door and say, "I think I'm going to go walk 2 hours." And although I'm not totally alone, I can walk wherever I want to walk, and I can't do that in Washington.

I guess I could, I could walk around the circle for—I do run the circle. I like that. I love the nature. I love to get in the pickup truck with my dogs as the sun is setting, go look for game.

Q. You're a pretty gregarious guy. I've seen you at many a ball game.

The President. Yes.

Q. Some of your friends are surprised that you like to come out here, basically in the middle of nowhere, and just kind of be by yourself.

The President. I guess they don't know what it's like to be the President. [*Laughter*] I get plenty of quality time with a lot of really good people. Sometimes, it's important to just get away, as well.

Plus, you know, one of the things we miss in Washington is our friends. And they're

here. We've got the Weisses here. The Gammons are here. Pam Nelson is here. And we find it really relaxing to sit down on the porch with our buddies and just shoot the breeze. And you know, it's amazing; you don't have to defend any policy you make. I mean, your friends are your friends. These people were friends of mine before I became President; they'll be friends of mine after I'm the President. And people just take you for what you are.

Q. Do you do your own cooking here at the ranch?

The President. Do I?

Q. Yes.

The President. I try not to. [Laughter] I get really hungry after a day's work. Occasionally, I'll cook a burger or a steak. I'm not bad at it.

Q. Otherwise, Mrs. Bush takes care of that?

The President. Actually, we've got Sam, a fine cook. And that's one of the benefits of being the President, the cook comes with you. [Laughter]

Q. Noticed a lot of animal droppings. Can you identify them?

The President. Well, no. I can't. Good question, though.

Q. I'm a Brooklyn boy, and I don't—

The President. I'm better on trees than I am on animal droppings. And I still need a lot of work on trees. I think this is a cedar elm. Cedar elms are identified by their skirts. Obviously, when they grow up in a sunlight-starved environment, the skirt doesn't grow.

But it's pretty special. You know, the thing about this place is that you would never guess that this kind of country was here, driving in from Waco to Crawford. And the—this is really a finger of the hill country coming up in here. And you've got the hay country, the black land prairie, and you've got a transition zone—really, a lot of live oaks and stuff. And then you come down into these canyons. And the middle fork of the Bosque runs a mile-and-a-half on our eastern boundary, and Rainey Creek is a mile-and-a-half on the northern boundary. And they are really great when there's water in them. They're even great when there's no water in them. They're good for game, holding game. The game like

to go down in the bottoms there, and they'll drink and hang out and hide.

As I say, the other day, I came down here, and Barney and I were—Barney's legs are so short, a half-mile run for him is pretty much like 5 miles for a human. He makes it about a quarter-mile or so, then they put him in the Gator, and he and I walk as he cools down. Thirty turkey came sprinting across the pasture down there, and Barney took off after them.

Barney's big thing to do is to chase armadillo. And you know, Laura has mulched our flower beds around the house, and we water in the evening, so therefore the soil is very moist and armadillo love to dig the soil looking for bugs. And so I went out there the other day, and there was Barney buried in this hole, chasing an armadillo. [Laughter] Both of them were in this hole. At any rate, Barney—finally got him out of there, and the armadillo wouldn't move.

Q. Seems like Spot would be the more outdoorsy-type dog.

The President. Spot's a good runner. You know, Barney—terriers are bred to go into holes and pull out varmint. And Spotty chases birds. Spotty's a great water dog. I'll go fly-fishing this afternoon in our lake—I don't know if you saw the lake coming in. Yes.

It's—we sprung a leak in the dam, and a guy from east Texas came over and spent the last 4½ days coring out the dam, putting clay in there and filling it back in. I think we've solved the leak.

But I'll go fishing, and Spot will be out in the middle of the lake, either chasing the lure or chasing a grasshopper or chasing something. She loves the water. But she—you know, for a 12-year-old dog, she's in incredible condition. But she—about every other day, she'll run with me. And if she doesn't run with me, she'll either—she'll walk with Laura and me. So she's doing great. And she's a hunter. She's just having trouble seeing. She doesn't see as well as Barney does now.

Q. So when they're at the White House, where do they run around? I mean, outside—

The President. They run around the yard there. About 6:50 in the morning to 7, as I take them down, we'll walk around some.

And then Dale, the fine gardener, will come out. And Dale and the dogs are in love. And they will spend the day with Dale. And he'll hit the tennis ball to them. Or he'll walk around on the grounds, and they'll run around. And then when it gets a little hot, they'll camp out in the gardener's office. And then when I finish work, or when Laura is ready, we'll go down and get them and bring them up to the Residence.

Q. Do you still have the horses?

The President. Yes.

Q. Does anyone ride them?

The President. No, they're too small yet. But we do have them. They're Kenneth Engelbrecht's.

Let's see what else I can tell you about this place?

Q. What's the average annual rainfall?

The President. I think it's 32 inches, but you need to look it up on the Internet.

Q. Is this summer especially dry?

The President. No. We got a half-inch. August is always dry. I mean, unless there's a hurricane, August is a dry month in Texas. And it's always hot; it's never not been hot. And Dallas—I don't know, Jackson [David Jackson, *Dallas Morning News*], you living in Dallas? It was some like ungodly number of days in a row of 100—50 days in a row or something.

This has been a relatively mild summer. But it had been really dry up until the last 3 years—last year. For 3 years prior to last year was really dry, and we didn't have any rain. And we had great rains this year. And the aquifers filled up, and it was seeping water all the time and the creek was running up until July. So it's—

Future Visits to the Ranch

Q. When are you coming back after—

The President. I don't know. I think we may have a scheduled trip in September. I'm giving a speech in San Antonio, if I'm not mistaken. And that will be just for a night. And I'm thinking about—I haven't decided when to hang my portrait in the State capitol, but it's finished. Or it's almost finished. One of the—the artist came out the other day just to get one final look. [Laughter] But I'm not sure how much time we'll spend then, and then Mr. Putin.

October is going to be taken up mainly with dealing with the Congress and going on the Far Eastern trip, about a 10-day trip.

Q. And then will you spend December, you know, around Christmas—

The President. No, we'll spend—look, the plans are right now, subject to change, that I would like to invite my entire family to Camp David, my mother and dad and brothers and sister and their kids. And then the day after, we'd fly down here and spend—

Q. For Christmas—at Camp David?

The President. No, no, the day—yes, Christmas at Camp David and then leave that day or the day after and come down here and stay down here until—I don't know—however long—whatever's appropriate.

Q. Sir, I don't want to be rude, but what does a ranch like this go for?

The President. You know, first of all, it's not for sale. You couldn't pay me enough.

Q. I believe that.

The President. Other than that, that's relatively rude.

Q. I apologize.

The President. No, no.

Q. Are you going to—are you going to bring Mr. Putin up through the canyons?

The President. I'd like to. If he wants to, you bet. He is a physical fitness person, and I bet he'd like to get up and go for a long walk.

Q. He's probably seen nothing like it.

The President. I'd love to show him the canyons. I will show him the canyons. And I think he'll like it out here. It will be a different look. The leaves—you get some colors down here. Some of the leaves—

Q. In the fall?

The President. Yes, you do. Nothing like New England, but you do get some colors.

Q. Do you know when he's coming, exactly?

The President. No, I don't. I'm not even sure, yet.

Q. You've done some work out here—

The President. I think he'd like to spend some time in Washington and do both, go to Washington and Crawford.

President's Working Vacation

Q. You've done some work out of here. Has it been more difficult to work out of here or—

The President. No, it's just the same. You know, when you pick up the phone and you call de la Rua to talk to him about Argentina, it's—it may be a different hookup, but it's the same voice.

Yesterday—as a matter of fact, in some ways, this place is better for work. Yesterday we spent—well, they arrived at 10 a.m. It took a while to get the press conference. We got back here at about 11:30 a.m. and met until—5:15 p.m., I think they left. That's the longest meeting I've had in a long time, on a very important subject. And so it gave us a chance to sit back and relax. It was a much less hectic schedule.

Therefore, we had a good chance to talk about a really important subject, which is our military strategies. And so in some ways, it lets—this place allows for more indepth discussions. Condi and I spend a lot of time just sitting around visiting about our foreign policy matters.

You know, Andy Card and I talked for a while yesterday. Josh is around. Karen Hughes was here. We spent a good deal of time with Karen talking about the fall and what we'll try to communicate in the fall.

I had a good visit with Vicente Fox on the phone. You know, we're working on immigration policy. And although I haven't been in the meetings, I have been in communications with—Margaret LaMontagne is heading up that task for us, and I think we'll make some pretty good progress there.

Q. When you have those business meetings, like the Joint Chiefs briefing, do you like to keep it separate from the living quarters on the ranch?

The President. Actually, you know, what we call the Governor's house, the place where you all came out during the—that's where we went. Condi and Karen Hughes stayed there. And right across the street from that is a—it's a nice looking government doublewide. [Laughter] And that's where the mil aide, the nurse, the WHCA head, the doc, they stay.

The CIA briefings I have on our porch, the end of our porch, looking out over the

lake. When Tenet came up, that's where we visited, out there.

You know, everybody wants to see the ranch, which I'm proud to show it off. So George Tenet and I—yesterday we piled in the new nominees for the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, the Vice Chairman and their wives and went right up the canyon.

Q. They didn't do this hiking in those uniforms?

The President. No, no, they didn't come up here. It was a quick tour.

Q. The marine would, though. [Laughter]

The President. But for large meetings and, you know—plus Laura had some guests and didn't want us traipsing around there. So it was a good idea to invite the wives. Laura thought of it. And I'm really glad she did. It was obviously a very sensitive decision on her part. They were thrilled to be here. As you can imagine, their husbands were nominated to be Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and they got to witness it. And, had she not caught it, they might not have been here. So it's good that she did.

Upcoming Budget Issues

Q. So when you go back, you're going to be immersed in all this budget stuff. Are you ready for this fight?

The President. Sure. I don't necessarily see it as a fight.

Q. Well, you drew a pretty strong line in the sand yesterday.

The President. Well, we've got a budget, see. The budget's been decided. So we're not fighting over the budget. The decision is whether or not Congress will stick to the budget. We had the budget discussion last spring, and I was very pleased with the outcome of the budget discussion.

As you know, discretionary spending grew at about 5 percent. I thought the priorities were pretty clear in the budget. And so the discussion will be, do budgets mean anything? And so far, the folks in charge of appropriations have answered the question affirmatively; budgets do mean something. And the supplementals and the emergency measures were, you know, right in line, and I appreciate that very much. So we'll see. We'll see whether or not there's the commitment to make national defense a priority.

Members of both parties are saying, well, we need to spend more, this, that, and the other. And that's good. What I hope they do is, they decide that the budget I submitted or the request I submitted for '02 is the right number and that they let us know that that's the number they will fund early, so that we avoid a fight, because I will fight for education funding and a national defense funding that I think is at the appropriate level. But fight isn't the right word yet.

Return to Washington, DC

Q. Are you sad that you have to leave here in about a week and go back?

The President. No, I'm not sad at all. I told Campbell [Campbell Brown, NBC News] life's a series of contrasts, and I will miss—I will miss Crawford, but I know I will be back here. And I think people have now got—are beginning to realize that this is our home, and I'm one of these guys that likes—I'm a homebody. I like my home. I like my own bedroom. I like hanging out with my family and friends here.

But I also know I can do my job from here, and I look forward to getting back to Washington and getting to work. I'll be all charged up. I think I'll have the right perspective. And you know, coming out here makes you realize that Washington is a wonderful place, but it's certainly not the center of all wisdom and knowledge. And there is a lot of wisdom in the folks of—you know, in the minds and souls of the folks of Crawford, Texas, just like there are amongst some of the elite in Washington.

Margaret LaMontagne

Q. Did you say Margaret LaMontagne is heading up immigration?

The President. She is the chief domestic policy adviser who is—and since that's domestic policy, she is in charge of that aspect of the—of domestic policy, and doing a great job. I'm really glad Margaret came to Washington. She is newly wed, by the way—Austin wedding.

Q. But she is known mostly as an education person here in Texas. Is she branching out these days?

The President. No, she was branched out from day one, as you—David, I'm surprised

you didn't know that we made her—from the minute I got sworn in, she was the head of domestic policy, which means on every issue that has been in the domestic scene, she has been very much involved, whether it be Medicare reform or—she's doing a great job. Margaret is a very smart woman. You bet, she was an education person in Texas. But I realized how brilliant a woman she is, and she can handle just about every task we give her. So she's doing a good job. I've got a good team.

All right. Let's go.

Q. Thank you. Thank you very much.

Q. Thank you for having us out here.

The President. I'm thrilled you got to see it. It will help you understand.

Q. What you do out here all day?

Q. It was a real treat. Thank you.

The President. Thanks, I'm glad you came.

Q. There may be a story about Ms. LaMontagne appearing in the Dallas Morning News.

The President. Got it. Okay. I appreciate you asking.

Thank you, David.

Q. Thank you.

The President. I'm sorry, I didn't mean to be sarcastic. I thought you didn't know, seriously.

Q. I always like to play dumb, and it's an easy role for me to fill, too.

The President. No false modesty. [*Laughter*]

[*The tour continued.*]

Ranch Tour

The President. I'm going to give you a little tour to get out of here, so everybody can see this. Whoa baby! I may be going in the "whining pool." [*Laughter*]

Q. Can we come?

Q. Can we all come?

The President. I must confess, it was a great addition.

Q. They won you over on that, didn't they?

The President. That's the canyon we went up, the top—obviously. And there's a series of roads out of this place. But I want you to see this in here. This is—this greens up really nicely.

In the evenings—you'll see some cliffs over here that really are—I think are really special. See them over there. I'll give you a better view up here.

I just want to practice driving. *[Laughter]*

Q. I've got to ask, who does your laundry? Because that's pretty filthy.

The President. Yes, it is.

Q. I can't imagine Mrs. Bush wants that stuff in her—

The President. Well, we've got a washer—the washer/dryer room is right off the porch. And so I'm not saying I strip down outside on the porch or anything, but I am saying I don't traipse this stuff into the house, either. *[Laughter]*

Maria Galvan is with us, as well. Maria is a—lived with us in Austin, and she lives with us in Washington.

Q. Have your parents been down? Or are they still sucking up the salt air up north?

The President. They haven't been down this summer.

Q. Are they coming?

The President. Mother and Dad have been here twice. Both times they were here, it was just green.

See these cedar elms? These are spectacular cedar elms. I'll show you another tree that I think is really special.

There's a whole stand of cedar elms. This is a pecan right here, lot of fruit on it.

In the evenings, this is where the deer lie down, in here. It's kind of tight, and they feel protected. These are called motts. When you see the same type of tree growing close together, it's called a mott, m-o-t-t.

Q. Is the red deer still here? The—

The President. Died.

Q. Oh, no! What—

The President. Ate Johnson grass, and the Johnson grass ended up poisoning it. Our neighbor to the north of us—I think it was our neighbor to the north—saw a bunch of buzzards circling and thought he lost one of his cows. He went up there, and the red stag was there.

This is the middle fork of the Bosque River we're coming up to now. We've been paralleling it. You'll get a sense of what it's like. It's a very gravelly-bottom river.

And we've got a beautiful bur oak stand in here. That's a bur oak, these great big oaks.

And we discovered what's a pretty rare tree, this tree right there, is a chinquapin oak, which is mainly found in the Houston area. I think it's the Houston area. It's not found here; it's more of an east Texas tree.

That's a bur oak. See that—

Q. Like Adam Burr?

The President. Yes. And that is the—

Q. Aaron Burr.

The President. Are you reading "Shining Brothers"? *[Laughter]* I am.

Anyway, see, that's the middle fork of the Bosque. That's our neighbor on the other side there.

Q. So this is the fence line of your property?

The President. Well, the middle—and there's some water pooled in there. Not much. It's pretty dry. But there are some places where the water has pooled up.

Q. How did you learn all this stuff about these trees? Did you have someone come out here and drive you around?

The President. Well, we've got a book. And I knew some of the trees, you know. The oak trees are pretty—the pecan trees, that's the Texas tree.

But we had a guy Thursday—two men Thursday that are professors at Texas A&M that Dianne White Delisi, who was a State rep and good friend of mine—you remember her, David—she is the State rep from Temple. Do you know her, David?

Q. Yes.

The President. She came out and brought them over here. They wanted to see the place. They had heard we had some beautiful hardwoods on it. And they came and were really pleased with the health of our trees and the quality of our trees.

That's the middle fork, and then it hits the Rainey Creek, which I'll show you up here.

Hunting

Q. Do you know if you're planning to be out here for Thanksgiving?

The President. I'm not sure, Sandra [Sandra Sobieraj, Associated Press].

Q. Can those wild turkeys rest easy?

The President. Yes.

Q. Have you been hunting them?

The President. No, I'm not going to hunt the turkeys.

Q. The pigeons? Do you hunt the pigeons?

The President. No, we don't have any pigeons—yes, the doves.

Q. The doves, I mean.

The President. Dove season is September 1st.

Q. Oh, it's not the season. Okay.

The President. I won't be here. Plus, we don't have that many doves yet. We usually don't get a lot of doves until there is a cold front pushing them south. I hunted last year up here.

Q. That was the day you grilled up the doves, right?

The President. Did what?

Q. The doves.

The President. With the bacon and the jalapeno?

Q. Yes, we had a bet.

The President. Did you eat them?

Q. I had a bet with an AP reporter that we couldn't get it on the wire.

The President. Did you get it on the wire?

Q. Oh, yeah.

Ranch Tour

The President. The broad-leaf tree that was a little yellow there is a sycamore tree, which are pretty unusual, and they grow in the creeks.

See the size of these cedar elms here? They are magnificent trees.

Q. Quite the arborist—

The President. I am. Tree man.

Q. Tree man. [Laughter]

Q. Were you always a tree man?

The President. No, I wasn't. I like trees, but I have come to appreciate them a lot. And I'm guarding them jealously against water suckers like cedars.

Here's the creek, obviously now dry. But it will give you a sense of what it's like. And for most of the year this year, water was running over the crossing.

And again, the broad-leaf trees in the middle are the sycamores. That is an ash. That is a willow of some kind; see that in the middle there? And then you've got oaks and pecans. So you have four or five different types of trees along here. These are pecans. That's a sycamore, and that's a huge pecan tree.

Q. Do you get rattlesnakes on the property?

The President. I haven't seen any but have seen cottonmouths, which are poisonous water snakes. We found them in the creek. I actually had a man come up in here, into some of the canyons where we suspect there's rattlesnakes. And he's a rattlesnake hunter, and he's a local guy. And what they do is they come up and stake it and spray diesel fuel up in the hole and drug the snakes and extract them.

Q. For what?

The President. To get rid of them. And they use them to suck the venom—to milk them to get the venom as an antidote.

Q. Have any of your guests gotten poison ivy or snakebites or anything like that from walking around?

The President. Not yet.

Q. But you're hoping some day?

The President. I hope they're not.

Q. Just kidding.

The President. Put the doctor to use.

Here is one of our places that have held water.

Q. Oh, yes.

The President. We've got a couple of them on this place like this. And anyway, the creek goes for a while. And this will give you a sense of the cliffs up there. See up there?

This property—this part of the ranch goes another—the trail goes another three-quarters mile, and then we go another probably quarter mile beyond that, but there's no road. This will give you a sense of the cliffs right here. We own to the top of these cliffs.

Q. Wow! Look at the buzzards on the top.

The President. They're watching us.

Q. Guarding your border.

The President. Making sure. First the red stag and then—

Q. A few reporters?

The President. Yes. [Laughter]

Q. How many miles does this dirt road snake through here, do you know?

The President. David, I'm not even sure. I should measure them. I paid for them.

Here's another one of the canyons. It's got a stairstep to it, a very long, gradual stairstep.

Q. I think that's the one you showed us the first time.

The President. Yeah, it was.

Q. You said there were seven?

The President. Seven, yes.

Q. How many different properties did you look at before buying this one, or was this love at first sight?

The President. Well, this was—it was for me, actually. We had seen some—we had seen a lot of property in Texas, you know. And a guy said, you know, we ought to look in this area of Texas. He had bought a ranch in Gatesville, which is right up the road. And we went and looked at his place, and he said, “Oh, by the way, you ought to come and see this Engelbrecht ranch.” And we came over here, and I thought it was fabulous.

Laura was a little worried that it would be hard to access the really beautiful parts of the ranch. And I told her I would build the roads necessary to make sure all of us could get down there easily. And it took a couple of months. And then another buyer came in, and they didn’t honor the deal.

There’s the house. See how it sits in those trees? The guy did a fabulous job of—and it’s facing south so it picks up a lot of the southerly breeze. I’ll take you—

Q. This is manmade, this lake?

The President. Yes, I made it. I paid for it. Obviously, with no rain, it evaporates. And we’ve had some good rains. There are pumps over there. We keep it pumped because when it does rain, it fills up that little island, and we don’t want to kill those oaks.

But it’s stocked. I bought a little bass boat. It’s stocked—

Q. Very little.

The President. It is. It’s perfect for that size lake.

It’s stocked with a lot of bait fish, and I put in 600 fingerlings. So we started—didn’t put any big bass in to begin with. And I’ve caught nearly a pound in size.

This will give you a sense for the place. The place on the left there is the guesthouse, bedrooms, sitting room. And then on the right, you can see, it’s kind of sectioned. And in between—there’s three sections, and in between each section there is what they call a dogtrot, which is a screened-in porch built to capture the southerly breezes. And the porch you see out there, we sit out there in the evening—as you can see, the chairs lined up there, looking east, so the sun is not in our eyes. And there is a beautiful fireplace there that we use in the winter.

This is the—right here is an old hand house that we’ve refurbished. And now one half of it is a gymnasium, free weights and exercise machines, and the other half is a room.

Q. I’ve got to ask, do you drive from there to there to work out, or do you walk?

The President. Actually, I walked yesterday when I went to lift weights, but I’ve got a little golf cart.

This is the Secret Service. They’re building this. And the doublewide will leave. This is their command post. And they were kind enough to ask, you know, whether or not—you know, what kind of design would be helpful to make it blend in. We helped, obviously, put it in that mott of oaks so it doesn’t stand out too much.

We own over to that fence line there. So we go from here about a mile that way, and from here about a half mile that way, maybe a little more. And then that’s our western fence line.

Q. Was that your white pickup truck outside the house?

The President. No. That is Kenneth Engelbrecht’s, which I use.

Q. The Secret Service is not nervous about you driving?

The President. I haven’t hit anything yet. But this is the one place I drive.

I built this little pond over here. Actually, it’s got more water than it looks. And that’s a fun—fun little place to go fly-fish. One of my favorite things to do is when it cools—it never cools off—when the sun starts going down, I walk the dogs over there, and they’ll play around in the water.

We planted all these oaks along here, and this is going to be spectacular, as you can see, the walkway.

I don’t think we’ll be able to get around. By the way, one of Laura’s projects is going to interest you. This is buffalo grass, which is the native grass. And she’s planted buffalo grass here, and we’re trying to restore—starting with the land between the house and the lake, including front and back yard—restore all this country to its native—native grasses. And one of the A&M guys was an expert on native grass, as well. And we’ve got a man out here from the local area that is a

wildflower and native grass expert. The dam has got native grass on it.

And the idea is to have these grasses that will be able to sustain themselves, particularly in the hot—in the heat, all around, particularly the house and as far as you can see around the house. They are not good for, you know, cattle necessarily, although they could be.

Q. Otherwise, do you have a sprinkler system?

The President. We do have a sprinkler system. The roof drains off into a gravel—see the gravel in front of the guesthouse there? That's a gravel collector that drains into a cistern. And we water the trees and the yard.

Obviously, if there's no rain, like we've had recently, then we are on city water, and we water at night. We're not using much water now because the grass has pretty well taken hold.

The guy laid this house in these oaks and did, we think, a beautiful job of placing it in the landscape. There's native rock on the house. It's a pretty good-size house.

Q. It's modest size.

The President. Yes. It's modest, but it's pretty good size. I mean, the tall ceilings—you can't see how tall the ceilings are, because the perspective is different because of how it sits in the trees, but it's perfect for us.

And you see straight ahead is the screened-in porch there. And then the darker windows there, those are screened-in porches, as well. And the girls' two bedrooms are on this end. Laura and I are in the middle. And what we call the great room, which is a combination sitting room and dining room, is right there.

Q. On the end, by where the Adirondack chairs are on the porch?

The President. Right. And then this is the guesthouse and the garage.

Q. Do you expect Putin to stay in this guesthouse?

The President. I don't know what we are going to do. We haven't figured that out yet. It's going to be—

Q. It's pretty close, if you're right there.

The President. I would love Putin to stay there. He can go down to the Governor's house. I don't know what we're going to do.

You can imagine, it's going to be a mass scramble of who gets to stay on the property and where everybody else will stay. We haven't figured out the logistics. We're still working on the Mexican state dinner. [Laughter]

[The tour continued.]

Q. You mean you're going to sneak out to Ohio without telling us?

United Nations Conference on Racism

The President. Your question didn't get much news yesterday, on the—or did it—on the conference?

Q. Did you expect it to?

The President. No, not really.

Q. They took notice in New York and overseas.

The President. Did they? Good. What did they say?

Q. You saw the U.N. human rights woman, Robinson—

Q. Yes, she said again she'd go.

The President. Well, she ought to clean up the language. It's discriminatory, it seems like to us. And—yes, maybe they will.

Ranch Tour

Q. So this is environmentally friendly?

The President. Yes, very much so, for a couple of reasons. One, it's got a natural water collection devices all around it, and it's got a heater and cooling system that takes water and circulates it and transfers the cold water to the heat and the heated water to the cold, because the ground temperature—the subterranean temperature stays constant.

So it's the same type of system that Vice President Gore put in the Vice Presidential house, which I didn't realize, but he did.

Q. Those aren't solar panels on the roof, it just looks—

The President. No, no, no, no. No, those aren't solar panels. That technology isn't quite worked out.

But even more efficient, however, is the transference of heat and cool as a result of circulating water below the—it's called thermal heating and cooling—okay.

Thank you all for coming. We'll see you.

Q. Thank you. Thank you so much.

The President. Thank you for coming. I'm glad you're here. David "Action" Jackson, thanks.

Okay, we'll see you all.

NOTE: The exchange began at 11:05 a.m. In his remarks, the President referred to ranch foreman Kenneth Engelbrecht; President Vladimir Putin of Russia; President Fernando de la Rúa of Argentina; President Vicente Fox of Mexico; State Representative Dianne White Delisi of Texas; and Mary Robinson, U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks at a Steelworkers Picnic in West Mifflin, Pennsylvania

August 26, 2001

The President. Thank you all very much. Governor, you don't look a day over 60. [Laughter]

I appreciate my friend Tom Ridge. I really care for him a lot. He's a really decent man, and I know the people of Pennsylvania are going to miss him when he retires from the Governor's office. He's done a good job—a good, even-handed fellow who, like me, married really well. [Laughter]

I'm thrilled that my wife has traveled with me today. We came up from Crawford, Texas. I was wondering what that wet stuff coming out of the air was for a while. [Laughter]

But I can't tell you how proud I am of Laura. When I married her, she was a public school librarian. [Applause] There's always one in every crowd. [Laughter] But like that public school librarian, she not only loves books; she loves children. And one of the things she is going to work with me on is to make sure that every child—I mean every child—in America gets a first-rate education by starting with making sure every child in America learns to read.

Thank you for coming, Laura.

We both grew up in Midland, Texas. She remembers me—I think she remembers me as a Little League baseball player, so she is somewhat in shock over the fact that I'll be inducted into the Little League Hall of Fame this evening. [Laughter]

It's an honor to be here in Pennsylvania. I'm proud that two of my Cabinet officials are here. My long-time friend from Texas Don Evans—one thing about old Don, and even Leo will admit this, he'll answer the phone call from the people who work in the steel industry. When you call, he'll be on the other end of the line.

Audience member. [Inaudible]

The President. Come on.

And Elaine Chao, I'm proud of her representing the working people of America in my Cabinet. She's smart; she's capable; and she brings a lot of dignity to her office, as well. Thank you for being here, Elaine.

I've enjoyed working with Senator Santorum and Melissa Hart and Bob Ney from Ohio. Every time I see them, they say, "Steel—Mr. President, you must understand steel and its woes." You've got three great advocates for the steel industry and its workers in those three elected officials who took time out of their day to be here. Congress is on vacation; the country has never run better. [Laughter] But I appreciate them coming over to say hello.

I want to thank Tom Usher and congratulate the folks at U.S. Steel for 100 years of productivity for America. I want to thank Leo. I was sitting there watching during the speeches. Leo was sitting there working the Secretary of Commerce the whole time. [Laughter] He never misses a moment to say what's on his mind, and I appreciate a straightforward fellow, a fellow who you know where he stands.

And I was asking the folks at the table I was at, "How is Leo doing?" They said, "We like him. He represents us well." And I appreciate your service, Leo, and we look forward to working with you to do what's right for the steelworkers and the steel industry of America.

I got to say something about Ross. Where are you, Ross? There he is. He's my table host. Ross made sure I got through the line in a record time, 45 minutes. [Laughter] It's not that he stopped and ate every dish along the way, but he was gracious in letting me say hello to as many people as I could.